



DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov



Above: one of 55 baby blankets staff from Genesee County Pierson Road district office stitched for seasonal giveaway to a local hospital.

Canned, stitched and given with love this Christmas

From Ron Logan, District Manager
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This year was notable for the Pierson Road District's "Can is a Can is a Can" canned goods fundraiser we hold at Christmas time each year. This is our third year since I became district manager and each year it gets better and better. This year we also encouraged the contribution of money due to the multiplier effect our beneficiary, Carriage Town Ministries of Flint, is able to get through their increased purchasing power with Gordon's Food Service, the Food Pantry, and others.

This activity is billed as a competition – with casual dress days as the motivator – between units in our office. Final totals this year show the winner being Unit 16, headed by family independence manager **Rose Ash**. Overall, district staff raised and donated 1,820 cans of food and \$425 in cash!

Also this season, **Traci Sbresny** spearheaded our annual "Baby Blanket Day" which involved 23 of our workers getting together to make baby blankets. This year's beneficiaries were the Hurley Hospital Neonatal Unit and the St. Luke's Women's Center. The staff made 55 blankets in four hours while still seeing applicants and walk-in customers. Those 55 are broken down as 40 flannel ones for Hurley and 15 fleece ones for St. Luke's. The recipients couldn't have been happier with the results and all staff involved had a good time completing them while enjoying snacks donated by other staff and managers.

By the way, we are widely known as the "BDD" which stands for the Best Doggoned District in Genesee DHS. The above two examples help drive home that acronym as far as I'm concerned. I'm very proud of the generosity of all the staff at the BDD, especially when the need in Flint and Genesee County is so great and also especially at this time of year.

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DHS employee writes book for homeless children

Dawn Ritter, an Early On coordinator for DHS in Lansing, has written a book for homeless children. The book called "Where Do You Live?" was inspired when Dawn made a connection with her local homeless coalition. She was looking for a service project with her church women's group. The coalition presented to the group the work they are doing in Shiawassee County where Dawn lives. They were looking for a coloring book or something that could promote homelessness awareness with small children.

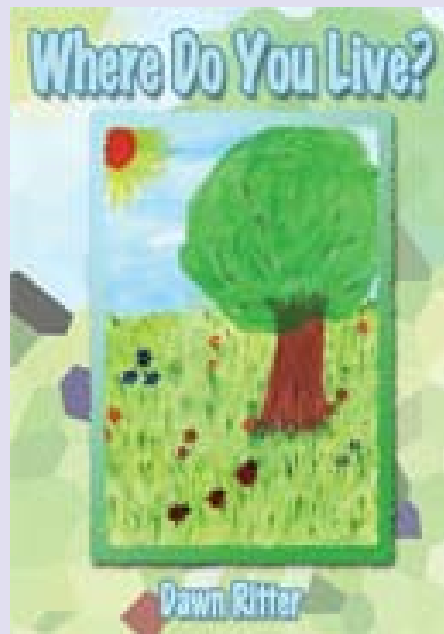
"Where Do You Live?" is a short children's book about a bug family that is finding its way about where it could live. The back of the book has open blank white pages the child can use during reading to draw or write about where he or she lives.

"According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, more than 1.3 million children are likely to experience homelessness in a given year. This alarming statistic is the impetus for my book," said Ritter, who has worked for DHS for almost 13 years.

Dawn – a licensed master social worker – designed the book with the idea that social workers, counselors or home visitors could use it with a child who is homeless or experiencing transition. It is a good tool to help a child relate to their own situation.

"My work in children's protective services and foster care and adopting a child from the foster care system provided lots of experiences with children in transition or homeless situations," she said. "This has been a very rewarding experience. I hope 'Where Do You Live?' can help some children deal with their situations."

The book can be purchased through Authorhouse publishers at www.dawnritter.com with most of the proceeds going back into helping the homeless population.



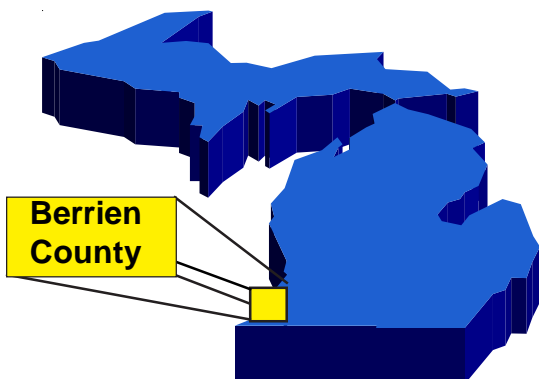
Christmas came early for foster children in Berrien County

The Wal-Mart Foundation gifted Berrien County foster children to the tune of \$25,000 in the form of 500 gift cards for \$50 each.

The event took place Dec. 20 at the Benton Harbor Wal-Mart, where The Salvation Army accepted the cards, then worked with **Berrien County DHS** to distribute the gifts to foster children.

The Salvation Army identified eight U.S. communities where the need was far greater than available resources – Anchorage, Alaska; Benton Harbor; Detroit; Camden, N.J.; Ashland, Ohio; Portland, Ore.; Knoxville, Tenn.; and Moundsville, W.Va. – and worked with the Wal-Mart Foundation on the Christmas promotion.

This year's Christmas surprise was the latest in a 20-year alliance between the two partners.



Crawford and Otsego County staff donated more than \$100 of nonperishable food for local pantry referrals (pictured) during September and October 2007. The food donations were raised in honor of the 2007 Michigan Harvest Gathering. Staff kicked off the food collection drive with a pizza party put on by administration followed by a staff meeting on Sept. 25 in Crawford and Sept. 27 in Otsego. Unfortunately, the picture could only capture a portion of the donations. Thanks, Crawford and Otsego staff—you are the best!

– from Sue McNally

Busy holidays and good deeds in the community

From Polly Fredericks
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December at the Monroe County DHS is a very busy month but we always enjoy putting together the Christmas stockings for the kids. The volunteer coordinator and two volunteers (Madge Mathis and Mary Curley) filled over 50 Christmas stockings with items purchased by staff donations such as cute penguin masks, stickers, puzzles, finger puppets, penguin ice cube bubbles, play dough, various other toys, bubble gum and candy. The front desk staff gave them out as the children came in during the holiday week.

Monroe County employers and residents also helped our foster children. Old Navy employees purchased lovely gifts for six of our foster care kids this year. Also, St Mary's parishioners purchased gifts for another 40 children referred by our foster care workers.

In our office, volunteer coordinator Polly Fredericks and DHS Board member Carol Frederick worked at the Monroe County Salvation Army's distribution site on Dec. 21 giving out food, clothing, toys and other gifts to more than 1,200 Monroe County residents. The needs are great and we are pleased our community responded again this year.



Above: A few of the children that benefited from Monroe DHS and community goodwill this year.

Santa visits the Bureau of Juvenile Justice via Kal's Kristmas

Event held in honor of former coworker helps everyone

By Mary Eldredge
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WHITMORE LAKE – For the sixth consecutive year, DHS staff of the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Whitmore Lake Training Center sponsored a holiday program for youths. The program was the brainchild of former BJJ staffer **Kalvin Holt**, who believed it was important to model care and concern to our youths rather than just speak to them about such attributes.

The program had no name; it was an informal effort on Calvin's part as he sought to provide what he calls "a little something under the tree" for the youths at one of the bureau's community justice centers. Tragically, Calvin was killed in an auto accident on his way home to Southfield after a day-long meeting in Lansing last Aug. 9. Calvin was employed in the bureau's Education Services Unit as an educational consultant. Beyond being an employee that came to work every day with a positive focus on his work and those we serve, Calvin volunteered personal time to tutor youths placed in the bureau's treatment facilities. He also completed his Ph.D. in education at Wayne State University in June 2006.

As the 2006 holiday season approached, Calvin's friends and co-workers at the training center decided they wanted to continue Calvin's holiday giving and the effort was christened "Kal's Kristmas." The first Kal's Kristmas (2006) closely resembled the previous four years in that one community justice center was selected for sponsorship. For 2007, staff challenged themselves and Kal's Kristmas sponsored all 39 youths placed in community justice centers in Bay City, Flint, Kalamazoo and Lansing. Donations came from across the bureau and from several secret Santas. The result: youths and staff were served a luncheon at the Whitmore Lake Training Center on Dec. 14 where gifts were distributed.

In addition to the gifts, two reconditioned mountain bikes with helmets were raffled off and given to one youth each at Parmenter House in Bay City and Flint House. The bike raffle was possible due to the efforts of a staff member who is also a mountain biking enthusiast and has managed to help one of the bureau's northern facilities establish a bike maintenance and repair component to their vocational education program. The real value of these bikes is realized when you know that one of the biggest challenges for youths attempting to establish their independence is overcoming transportation gaps. A mountain bike is a viable means of getting to work – even during Michigan winters.

Stress management: what's in it for you?

By Employee Service Program

www.michigan.gov/esp

Every year the pace of life seems to be accelerating for each of us. Juggling multiple demands in the workplace is often a pattern that is continued in our personal lives. Striking a balance between work and our personal life may sometimes feel impossible.

Many of us are members of the “sandwich generation” and we find ourselves firmly wedged between the needs of our children and the needs of our aging parents. Attending to parent's health concerns, as well as our own, can compound our lives even more. Couple this with other life stressors such as work pressure, family issues, financial challenges, and adjustments to young adults leaving the nest; we may begin to feel overwhelmed.

When that happens, some individuals may begin to find themselves dealing more frequently with feelings of depression, feeling out of control or unable to tackle the day ahead. However, with prevention and stress management intervention strategies we can more effectively learn to manage the stress, pressures and demands that we live with.

When all is said and done, we may not have a lot of control over everything that happens in our lives, but we can learn to control how we respond to life's challenges.

One easy first step is to visit the State of Michigan Employee Service Program's online Systematic Stress Management Program at www.michigan.gov/esp.

This program allows you to customize your own personal stress management plan and offers seven learning modules that can be used individually or altogether:

- Understanding stress.
- Type A and B behaviors.
- Relaxation training.
- Stress management at work.
- Thinking differently.
- Communication and stress.
- Time management.

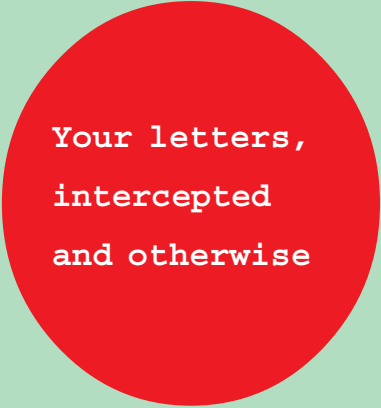
Professional confidential counseling and other services are available free of charge to state employees and their adult family members through the Employee Service Program, Monday – Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

To schedule an appointment or get further information please call (517) 373-7630 or (800) 521-1377.

Sorry! There are no letters to share in this issue. Customer letters praising employees are very popular with other employees. To submit a customer letter for publication:

1. Ensure your supervisor knows about this and approves.
2. If a client sent the letter, have them sign a **Consent for Publication** form, which is downloadable from the MS Word template as form **0199.dot**
3. Obtain the verbal permission of everyone named in the letter before sending it for publication; obtain the verbal permission of letter writers that are not clients.
4. Send the letter and a copy of the signed consent form by fax (517-373-8471) or by email to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov
4. Include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of the employee(s) cited in the letter.

If there are any questions about the letter after that we will contact you. Thanks!



Your letters,
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and otherwise

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